

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for use in facilitating access with a distributed network, the apparatus comprising:
 - a plurality of persistent connections to one or more servers in a network; and
 - a controller that controls communications over the persistent connections;
 - communication ports coupled with the persistent connections, where at least one of the communication ports receive requests for objects;
 - wherein the requests are communicated over the plurality of persistent connections and the requested objects are received over the plurality of persistent connections, and at least two of the requests are received from two different users and are communicated over the same persistent connection.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller dynamically adjusts the number of persistent connections.
3. The apparatus of claim 2, further comprising:
 - an idle timer coupled with the controller, wherein the controller activates the idle timer when a first persistent connection becomes idle, and terminates the first persistent connection when a predefined time period expires before a request for an object is communicated over the first persistent connections.
4. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the controller activates an additional persistent connection when an additional request is received and the existing plurality of persistent connections are in use, and routes the additional request over the additional persistent connection.

5. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the controller distributes the requests to be communicated over the plurality of persistent connections such that the requests are routed to persistent connections having lightest loads.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
a cache coupled with the communication ports, wherein a first received object is stored in the cache when a first request associated with the first object has a lower priority than a second request for a second object that has not been received.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
a load tracker coupled with at least one of the communication ports, where the load tracker identifies which of the plurality of persistent connections has a lightest load, wherein the controller communicates with the load tracker and routes a request for an object over a persistent connection having the lightest load according to the load tracker.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller tracks priorities of the received requests and delivers the objects to the requesting user in the order of the priority.

9. A system for use in communicating data with devices, the system comprising:
a proxy comprising:
a controller providing at least some control of the proxy;
a memory coupled with the controller, the memory comprises a cache that stores data; and
a load tracker coupled with the controller, the load tracker provides load information to the controller; and
a plurality of persistent connections coupled with the proxy, where the plurality of persistent connections are connections over a distributed network that are activated and maintained by the proxy.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the proxy further comprises:

a persistent connection controller coupled with an idle timer, wherein the idle timer determines a period of time for which a first persistent connection is idle, and the persistent connection controller releases the first persistent connection when the first persistent connection is idle for a predefined period of time.

11. The system of claim 9, wherein the proxy further comprises a persistent

connection controller coupled with the plurality of persistent connections, the persistent connection controller activates an additional persistent connection when an additional request is received while none of the existing persistent connections are idle.

12. The system of claim 9, wherein the proxy further comprises:

an object identification evaluator coupled with the controller, the object identification evaluator identifies a user associated with a received object; and

an object router coupled with the object identification evaluator, where the object router routes the received object to the user as identified by the object identification evaluator.

13. A method for use in providing client devices with access to a distributed

network, the method comprising:

establishing a plurality of persistent connections to servers over a distributed network;

maintaining the plurality of persistent connections as active;

receiving a plurality of requests for objects; and

communicating the plurality of requests over the plurality of persistent connections where a first request and a second request are communicated over a first persistent connection.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the first request is received from a first client

device and the second request is received from a second client device.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:
adjusting the number of persistent connections that are maintained as active.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
monitoring a second persistent connection; and
releasing the second persistent connection when the second persistent connection is
idle for a predefined period of time.

17. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
receiving an additional request;
determining loading on each of the existing persistent connections;
activating an additional persistent connection when the additional request is received
while all of the existing persistent connections are loaded beyond a threshold limit; and
routing the additional request over the additional persistent connection.

18. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
receiving a first object;
determining that a third request is associated with the received first object; and
caching the first object until a second object is received that is associated with a
fourth request having a higher priority than the third request.

19. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
receiving a third request;
determining when one of the plurality of active persistent connections is idle; and
routing the third request to an idle persistent connection when one of the plurality of
persistent connections is idle.

20. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
receiving an additional request;
determining which of the plurality of persistent connections has the lightest load;
and
routing the additional request over a persistent connection with the lightest load.